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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 023571

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/07/2021

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [TSPA](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: PRC CLAIMS HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGERY ON GOOGLE EARTH
COULD AID TERRORIST ATTACKS ON CHINA

Classified By: Classified by Deputy Chief of Mission David S. Sedney.
Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) China wants the United States Government to take action to get Google to reduce the resolution of the Google Earth images of China's military, nuclear, space, energy and other sensitive government agency installations in order to deprive terrorists of potentially dangerous information, XXXXXXXXXXXX told the DCM on XXXXXXXXXXXX said the Beijing request was based on possible "grave consequences" if terrorists exploit the information to harm China. Google Earth is a private company, the DCM reminded XXXXXXXXXXXX was noncommittal on whether China would directly contact Google or the European imagery providers and the other sources of high resolution imagery on the Internet. Other countries have shared similar concerns with China, XXXXXXXXXXXX said, but he refused to divulge country names. End Summary.

Google Earth High Resolution Images a Threat to China

2. (C) Google Earth is providing high resolution images of sensitive Chinese facilities over the Internet, thereby endangering PRC national security, XXXXXXXXXXXX told the DCM during a XXXXXXXXXXXX meeting. These facilities include military installations, nuclear test sites, satellite launch sites, oil production facilities, power generating plants and important government departments. The resolution is one meter for most of China, and is as fine as 0.6 meters in Beijing and Shanghai, allowing anyone with Internet access to view these facilities in great detail. Moreover, Google Earth allows users to post information about specific locations, XXXXXXXXXXXX continued, which means information about important Chinese agencies and sensitive installations is effectively being published on the Internet.

"Grave Consequences" if Terrorists Use Imagery

3. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX said China is extremely concerned that terrorist organizations could access the high resolution imagery and posted information and present a grave threat to PRC national security. If terrorists used the imagery from Google Earth to cause damage to China, there would be "grave consequences," warned XXXXXXXXXXXX. In the spirit of our sound bilateral cooperative relationship, particularly on counterterrorism issues, XXXXXXXXXXXX asked that the United States

place "great importance" on China's concerns, understand the sensitivity of the matter and take action so that Google will reduce the resolution of the images of China's sensitive facilities.

DCM: Google a Private Company, and Not Imagery Source

13. (C) The DCM told XXXXXXXXXXXX that he would report the request to Washington, but noted that Google is a private company. The DCM said he had no information to offer on what, if any, role or response the United States Government might have to the Chinese presentation. The DCM noted that the Chinese points only asked for a reduction in the resolution and asked if the Chinese sought any specific level. The DCM also asked whether XXXXXXXXXXXX had contacted Google directly and, since Google purchases the imagery as any individual or entity can, whether China had contacted the satellite imagery providers.

XXXXXXXXXXXX: Other, Unspecified Countries Have Similar Concerns

14. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX responded that China is approaching the United States Government because the issue is directly relevant to counterterrorism and that while Google is a private company it operates in the United States "political and legal environment." China is requesting the United States take action to prevent the information from being misused to cause damage to China, XXXXXXXXXXXX reiterated. He offered that China had been in discussions with other countries with similar concerns about Google Earth. However, XXXXXXXXXXXX refused to provide the names of the other countries, noting he was unable to share the information due to prior agreements with

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those countries.

Europe the Source of Imagery, But Google Earth is the Key

15. (C) China will talk to Google about the "technical details," XXXXXXXXXXXX continued, adding that it is not for the MFA to determine the appropriate resolution level. China knows the source data comes from European companies, satellite operators and the European space agency but XXXXXXXXXXXX said China sees Google as the problem because it makes the information easily accessible. When pressed, XXXXXXXXXXXX admitted that Beijing had not yet contacted the European providers or the governments associated with the European space program. XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX said that while China will look at the other Internet sources of the high resolution imagery, Google,s well known imagery is of greatest concern.
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